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Collective Counter Cartography from Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin

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Collective Counter Cartography from Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin

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All three maps, illustrated with the help of Natalia Hosie, are part of my PhD project exploring the inner and outer workings of gardening spaces on left over spaces within cities. They are created through participative processes involving interviews, collective cartography workshops, and participative action research of one specific example: Prinzessinengarten in Kreuzberg, Berlin.

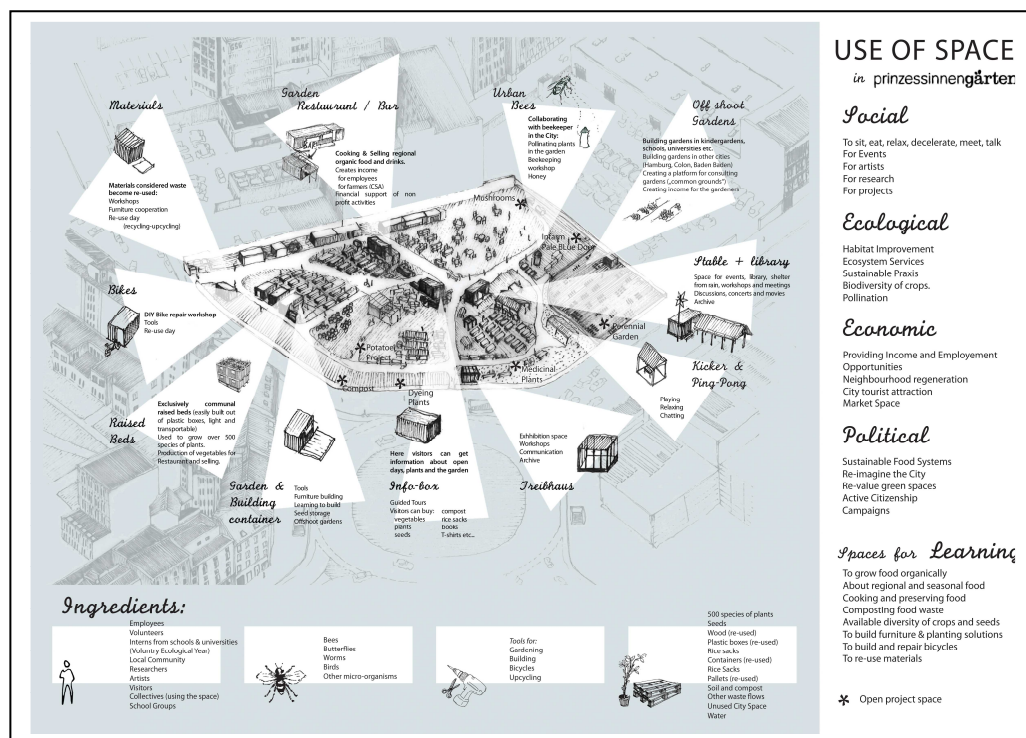
Berlin is a city in which collective gardening is not a new activity; however, more places like these are starting to appear. Prinzessinnengarten is unique and innovative in its entrepreneurial, self-funded structure, its collective approach to growing food (you can't own vegetables but can collaborate in allowing them to grow), and its flexible approach to use of the space—from university conferences to whisky tasting sessions.

This space is as big as two football (soccer) pitches and run as a non-profit social enterprise. It employs around ten people full time and an extra twenty people seasonally. They run a variety of workshops (from jewellery making, to natural dyeing, to city politics) and more entrepreneurial activities (such as a landscaping company, an up-cycled furniture collective, and a restaurant/cafe/bar). This space is built with modular and mobile infrastructure, both to comply with the criteria of temporary use but also in order to ensure that if it must move, it can. Land tenure is still the pressing issue, despite the garden being a new tourist destination in the quirky, gentrified Kreuzberg.

The place provides everyday activities in a different setting as a working assemblage of people, materials, space, other living beings, practices, and information, and works under values of suboptimality and “dedicated amateurship.” This approach enables an open structure that encourages people to participate. Weaknesses or lacks in the system become points in which new participants can get involved in upgrading. Their use of materials is also remarkable; they re-use industrial waste and take advantage of a frugal opportunism to save money and develop a specific aesthetic and identity based increasingly in the sociability the objects create and less in the way they look.

“Use of Space in Prinzessinnengarten”

The first map, “Use of Space in Prinzessinnengarten,” is a representation of Prinzessinnengarten: a mobile social-ecological garden in the middle of Kreuzberg Berlin. In this map, the different spaces, elements, and infrastructure related to the garden are located in order to highlight the diversity of activities within this inner city outdoor space. This hybrid, changeable, new kind of city landscape is becoming more and more common and brings our relationship with the city and its spaces to the fore.



“Socio-ecological X-Changes in Prinzessinnengarten”

The third map, “Socio-ecological X-Changes in Prinzessinnengarten,” is an attempt to model the flows coming in and the spaces created through this interaction. The garden becomes a city membrane in which the city intermingles with natural systems and with people to create specific spaces. It is more about spatial sovereignty through food than food security through space, as it is usually thought. In effect, the amount of food produced in this space is minimal considering this garden receives 100,000 visitors every year. This place becomes much more about feeding and researching our concerns and relationship to food than our stomachs. It is a hub in which people can talk about food and its convergent power, bringing city politics, everyday life, and citizenship to the table. In this way, it becomes a socio-ecological laboratory, giving agency to participants to try things out together.

